

**BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

**TITLE: TUITION WAIVER POLICY**

*Restated: July 1, 2008*

The purpose of this Policy is to provide a Tuition Waiver benefit for full-time Faculty and Staff and their eligible dependents to attend Mercer University and receive a waiver for undergraduate and graduate tuition charges, where it can do so without incurring substantial additional cost (including foregone revenue).

**Amount of Tuition Waiver Benefit**

For eligible *Faculty and Staff*, the Tuition Waiver will cover 100% of the tuition costs as defined below for Undergraduate or Graduate courses

For eligible *spouses and dependent children*, the Tuition Waiver will cover 100% of the tuition costs as defined below for undergraduate courses and 50% of the tuition costs as defined below for graduate courses.

**Employee Eligibility**

Employee eligibility to receive Tuition Waiver Benefits consists of satisfactorily meeting 3 criteria:

1. Employment Status
2. Service Requirements
3. Academic Requirements

*All 3 criteria must be satisfied for the employee to be eligible for benefits under this Policy.*

**1) Employment Status:**

For an employee to be eligible to receive Tuition Waiver benefits, the employment status of the individual at the time the Tuition Waiver is requested must be either:

Regular full-time, which is defined as any employee of Mercer University who works a minimum of 30 hours per week, including full-time employees on paid or unpaid leaves of absence and sabbaticals;

Or

Former employees having completed at least 10 years of continuous full-time service.

**2) Service Requirements:**

For an employee to be eligible to receive Tuition Waiver benefits the individual must have completed one full year of continuous, full-time service as of the first day of the semester in which the individual enrolls to receive the Tuition Waiver.

Or

Former employees having completed at least 10 years of continuous full-time service.

### **3) Academic Requirements:**

For an employee to be eligible to receive Tuition Waiver benefits, the individual must meet the admission requirements of and be accepted into the appropriate College or School.

### **Dependent Eligibility**

Dependent Eligibility to receive Tuition Waiver Benefits consists of satisfactorily meeting 4 criteria:

1. Legal Relationship to the qualifying Faculty or Staff Member
2. Employment Status of the qualifying Faculty or Staff Member
3. Service Requirements of the qualifying Faculty or Staff Member
4. Academic Requirements for the student

*All 4 criteria must be satisfied for the Dependent to be eligible for benefits under this Policy.*

#### **1) Legal Relationship to the Qualifying Faculty or Staff Member:**

For a dependent to be eligible to receive Tuition Waiver benefits, such individual must be either the lawful spouse or a dependent child of a Tuition Waiver eligible employee.

For purposes of this policy, a dependent child is defined in accordance with IRS Regulations, which includes a natural child, an adopted child, or a stepchild of an eligible employee who meets the requirements of Section 132(h) of the Internal Revenue Code, as it may be amended from time to time. It essentially includes all children age 19 years and younger, and children over 19 years as long as the child has not reached his 24<sup>th</sup> birthday by the end of the tax year, at least 50% dependent upon the parent, and enrolled full-time in school at least 5 months during the tax year. Children of any age who are employed full-time and/or are married are not considered eligible to receive Tuition Waiver benefits.

#### **2) Employment Status of the Qualifying Faculty or Staff Member:**

For a dependent to be eligible to receive Tuition Waiver benefits, the qualifying employee must be in an eligible status with Mercer as defined under *Employee Eligibility*.

#### **3) Service Requirements of the Qualifying Faculty or Staff Member**

For a dependent to be eligible to receive Tuition Waiver benefits, the qualifying employee must have completed one full year of continuous, full-time service as of the first day of the semester in which the individual enrolls to receive the Tuition Waiver.

Or

Former qualifying employees having completed at least 10 years of continuous full-time service.

#### **4) Academic Requirements for the Dependent Student**

For a Dependent to be eligible to receive Tuition Waiver benefits, the Dependent must meet the admission requirements of and be accepted into the appropriate College or School.

## **Retiree Eligibility**

Following the formal retirement of an eligible Faculty or Staff Member as defined above; Tuition Waiver benefits will be provided as follows:

If the employee, spouse, or dependent child is attending Mercer at the time of the formal retirement from the University, such student will be permitted to continue receiving the same Tuition Waiver benefits to complete the Undergraduate or Graduate degree program being pursued at the time of the formal retirement.

Spouse and Dependent Child eligibility for this Retiree provision is contingent upon them continuing to qualify for eligibility the same as provided above for Spouse and Dependent Children of active employees.

Should a retired employee, spouse or dependent child receiving retiree Tuition Waiver benefits under this provision cease attending Mercer University for more than two consecutive semesters for reasons other than illness or death of an immediate family member, such retiree benefits will no longer be made available to that individual.

## **Special Circumstances**

### **Separation of Service During a Semester**

In the event of the separation of service of the eligible employee, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, during a semester in which the individual or a dependent is receiving the Tuition Waiver benefit, the waiver will be permitted to continue until the end of that current semester, so long as the student has begun attending classes for which the waiver has been applied prior to the separation event.

### **Re-Hire of an employee**

Should the University rehire an individual, the employee must repeat the prescribed length of service requirements outlined above unless the separation from the university is less than a 500-hour break in service period. If the break in service is less than 500 hours, the employee will be given length of service credit earned during the immediately preceding episode of employment.

### **Death of an employee**

If an eligible spouse or dependent child is receiving Tuition Waiver benefits under any of the provisions above at the time of the qualifying employee's death, the Tuition Waiver will continue to be provided to the enrolled spouse or dependent child until the end of that current semester. Following such semester, the Tuition Waiver will be permitted to continue only if the deceased Faculty or Staff Member would have been eligible for benefits under the Retiree Tuition Waiver Benefit provisions above.

If the spouse or dependent child is not actively attending Mercer University at the time of the qualifying employee's death, Tuition Waiver benefits will be provided only if the deceased employee would have been eligible for benefits under the Retiree Tuition Waiver Benefit provisions above.

Spouse and dependent child eligibility for this provision is contingent upon them continuing to qualify for eligibility the same as provided above for spouse and dependent children of active Faculty and Staff.



It is understood, but is not a part of this Policy, that Admissions Deposits (Orientation, Housing and Tuition Deposits) are waived for Tuition Waiver Recipients as follows:

Faculty, Staff & Spouses: Orientation, Housing & Tuition Deposits are Waived  
Children not living in the Dorm: Housing & Tuition Deposits are waived.  
Children living in the Dorm: Tuition Deposit is waived.

Tuition Waivers are only available when the University does not incur substantial additional costs. As such, this policy is subject to change.

## **Course Selection, Schedules & Taxation Issues**

### Employees

No restrictions are placed upon the type of courses or the number of courses an eligible Faculty or Staff Member may take under the Tuition Waiver benefit.

Courses selected do not have to be job related and do not have to be taken in pursuit of a degree.

Employees are permitted to attempt a normal full course load and receive the Tuition Waiver, provided the individual's work schedule will permit such an attempt and provided the individual's supervisor does not object and approves of any variation in work schedule which must be accommodated in order for the individual to attempt such a course load. Nothing in this policy is intended to provide an individual with the entitled right to attempt a full course load under the Waiver in the absence of an accommodating work schedule and supervisor approval.

Employees are permitted to schedule only one course during one's normal working hours provided such individual obtains supervisory approval to do so. To schedule a course during one's normal working hours, Professional, Administrative and Classified Staff Personnel must obtain prior written approval from one's supervisor and the time away from one's work responsibilities to attend such course shall be considered to be the individual's meal period.

In all instances of being permitted to attend classes during one's normal working hours, acceptable arrangements must be made for the individual to work his regular number of hours required in the work day and work week in such a manner so as to not incur overtime pay under governmental wage and hour regulations.

### Dependents

No restrictions are placed on eligible Dependents as to the type of courses they may take under the Tuition Waiver benefit, the number of courses they are eligible to take, or the time the courses may be scheduled.

All graduate courses attempted by a dependent are considered to be a taxable benefit to the qualifying employee and additional payroll taxes (State, Federal and Social Security) will be withheld from the Employee's pay during the semester in which the Waiver is applied to cover the taxation on the amount of the Graduate Tuition Waiver being received.

## **Financial Aid Issues**

The Office of Financial Aid should be contacted for applications and additional information as follows:

All students (Faculty, Staff, and Dependents) eligible to receive the University Tuition Waiver benefit must apply through the Office of Student Financial Aid for the Georgia Tuition Equalization Grant (GTEG) and the Hope Grant.

Any grant of scholarship the student is awarded will be used by the university to offset the Tuition Waiver benefit. Tuition Waiver recipients are not eligible to receive scholarships funded by the University.

Tuition Waiver recipients may elect to apply for alternative loan programs, such as William D. Ford Federal Direct Loans and Direct PLUS (Parent Loans for Undergraduate Students) if they wish to be considered for loan funds, and such funds will not be used to offset the Tuition Waiver benefit. Tuition Waiver recipients are not eligible to receive Perkins Loan Funds.

## **Tuition Waiver Application Process**

Tuition Waivers may be submitted at the beginning of each academic year or at the beginning of each semester.

The process for receiving the Tuition Waiver benefit is as follows:

1. Obtain the appropriate Tuition Waiver application from Benefits Administration or download from the Benefits Administration web page.
2. Complete the application by providing all requested information.
3. If the waiver is to be for an employee, obtain the Supervisor's signed approval on the form where indicated.
4. Benefits Administration must receive the completed Tuition Waiver form no later than the first class day of the semester in which the Tuition Waiver is to be applied. For students enrolling after Early/Priority Registration or after the first class day, Tuition Waiver benefits will not be awarded if the Tuition Waiver form is received in Benefits Administration after the end of Drop/Add.
5. Incomplete Tuition Waiver forms will be returned to the qualifying employee without being processed and without being credited to the student's tuition account.
6. Benefits Administration will verify *employment eligibility* and then pass the original form on to the Registrar's Office where *Credit Hours Earned* will be determined. The form, being returned to Benefits Administration, will then be approved or declined. Approved applications will be sent to Financial Aid for processing. Declined applications will be returned to the initiating employee.